

Race: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 3-6

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Program Description

Help students better understand the complex subject of race: where it comes from, what it means in our society, and how it affects relationships. This video is in three segments. *What is Race?* – Is race real? Examine whether race is a biological or social categorization. *How Biased Are You?* – Are elementary-aged kids subconsciously biased when it comes to race? *What is Racism?* – How has race turned into racism? Explore the history of racial conflict and how it affects us today.

Onscreen Activities

Segment 1, What Is Race?

- Activity: Maya Angelou tells us, “in minor ways we differ, in major we’re the same.” Compare yourself with a classmate who looks different than you. Make a list of your similarities and differences. Was Dr. Angelou right?

Segment 2, How Biased Are You?

- Activity: Have you ever been treated differently because of the way you look? Write about how it made you feel. Did this experience help you become more accepting of people different than yourself?

Segment 3, What Is Racism?

- Activity: Think of a time when you observed racism in your school, your neighborhood, or on the news. Was the situation resolved peacefully? If not, suggest a way it might have been handled differently. Share your ideas in a picture or story.
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

Students will understand that:

- Dr. Martin Luther King was a strong advocate of nonviolent protest and fought for civil rights for all Americans with an eloquence that can be found in speeches such as his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.
- Throughout U.S. history, certain groups of people have been discriminated against for characteristics as superficial as the color of their skin. That racism still exists despite the passage of laws that make it illegal.
- Stereotypes can lead people to make unfair judgments about individuals and groups.
- Segregation is hurtful and unfair to those discriminated against.

Materials

- Race video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” speech (available online at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/>)
- Notebooks or journals (one per student)
- Pens or pencils
- Chart paper
- Markers

Procedures

1. Day 1: Read Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” speech to the class. (The speech is available on the Martin Luther King, Jr., Papers Project site at <http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/>.)
2. After reading the speech, write the following quotation on the chalkboard:

“I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”

Ask the class what they think that quote means and jot their ideas down on the chalkboard.
3. Follow up the discussion of Dr. King's quote by explaining to students that throughout American history, minorities have been discriminated against and judged for characteristics as superficial as the color of their skin. Talk about some examples of discrimination in our nation's past. Here are some examples:
 - In the 17th and 18th century, millions of African Americans were taken from their homeland and forced into slavery.
 - For many years, Native Americans were forced from their land by European settlers who immigrated to America.
 - Japanese American citizens were unfairly imprisoned in camps in the United States during World War II simply because their ancestry was Japanese and the United States was in a war against the country of Japan.



4. Explain that our nation has made great strides fighting discrimination, such as:
 - the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the constitution, which abolished slavery;
 - the Fifteenth Amendment, which made it illegal to deny people the right to vote because of the color of their skin or their religious beliefs; and
 - the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which made it illegal to discriminate against other persons in a public place or facility based on their color, sex, or religion.

But despite these tremendous accomplishments, racism still exists today.

5. Explain to students that discrimination, like the examples discussed above, can grow from assumptions and stereotypes that people make about others. Explain that an *assumption* is an idea that is taken for granted but not necessarily proven to be true. For example, it was assumed by European settlers that because the Native Americans looked different, spoke a different language, practiced different customs, and worshipped God differently, that they were somehow not as good or as “civilized” as the European settlers. How might assumptions have played a role in the other examples of discrimination mentioned above?
6. Now ask students to help define the word *stereotype*. Explain that when we make assumptions about an entire group of people, those assumptions are referred to as stereotypes. When assumptions and stereotypes influence our attitudes, we may find that making a fair judgment about someone or something is difficult. This influence on our judgment is called a *bias*.
7. Ask students what kind of discrimination they’ve observed in their everyday life. How do assumptions and stereotypes play a role in this discrimination? Do they see discrimination on TV? How about in their school or neighborhood?
8. Day 2: Today’s lesson involves arbitrarily segregating students into two groups – a “majority” group and a “minority” group – during the course of one school day. Before beginning this lesson, teachers may want to send a letter home to parents that describes this activity. In the note, explain that in this experiment children will discover how stereotypes and biases toward others come about and how it feels to be discriminated against. If any parent is opposed to the idea of their child’s participation, then of course that child is excused from the exercise.
9. Prior to the mock segregation, inform students that this exercise is merely “acting.”
10. Segregate students on an arbitrary but visible criterion. For example, you can randomly assign red and blue stickers for students to wear on their clothing throughout the experiment. The reds will comprise a majority of the population; the blues will represent the minority. The minority will not be given the same privileges or opportunities as members of the majority, for example:
 - The majority (reds) will be given free time to read or talk quietly with friends. The minority (blues) will work and not have free time to relax.
 - The majority will be allowed to work together on projects, if they wish. The minority must work independently.
 - The majority will get questions answered first. The minority will be called on last.

- The majority will be dismissed first for lunch, recess, and at end of day. The minority will be dismissed last.

NOTE: The "privileges" above will be exercised during the course of one full school day. To ensure that everybody has an opportunity to be in the majority and in the minority, you may want to switch groups halfway through the day or make this a two-day exercise.

11. Have all students keep a personal journal throughout the mock segregation. Encourage them to take notes on the dynamics of segregation and discrimination, noting how it feels to be a member of the privileged group and what it feels like to be discriminated against.
12. Day 3: Break the red and blue groups into smaller subgroups of three or four students each. All the students within a subgroup must be from the same original group. (Therefore, reds should be with other reds and blues with blues.)
13. In their small groups, have students share their ideas and thoughts on the mock segregation experiment using their journals for reference. On chart paper, have a recorder in each group write down what they felt was the most striking aspect of the mock segregation experiment. What did they find most disturbing or hurtful? What was most memorable?
14. Invite each group to report its findings to the whole class.
15. Conclude the three-day lesson plan by looking back at Dr. King's quote and students' notes about the quote. Is there anything more they'd like to add? Have students discuss what they've learned about discrimination. What didn't they know or truly understand before the experiment?
16. As a homework assignment, pass out copies of quotes taken from Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Have students explain King's message from each quote in their own words.
 - I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed -- "we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal."
 - Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.
 - I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become reality.
 - A man who won't die for something is not fit to live.

Discussion Questions

1. Where have you observed racism? How did it make you feel?
2. Define the ideas of civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance that Martin Luther King, Jr., embraced. Do you think his tactics would work today? Why or why not?
3. How might the media (newspapers, TV, movies, advertisements) perpetuate unfair racial stereotypes? What can these sources do to eliminate racial bias?
4. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate against a person in a public place or a federally funded business based on color, sex, or religious beliefs. Do you think this law has



completely eliminated racism in public places, such as restaurants, hotels, and businesses? Why or why not? What factors still play a role in racial discrimination?

5. Imagine you observe a classmate being discriminated against by other students because of some physical attribute, like skin color. What do you do? What could you say to the students who are being mean to their classmate?
6. Sometimes people make assumptions about an individual based on that person's skin color or religion. Why is that unfair? How do assumptions affect people's behavior toward others?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student actively participated during discussion of the "I Have a Dream" speech; keeps detailed, thoughtful notes in journal during mock segregation experiment; shares ideas during small group discussion; and participates in presentation of small group discussion notes to whole class.
- 2 points: Student participated during discussion of the "I Have a Dream" speech; keeps some notes in journal during mock segregation experiment, but not very deep; shares some ideas during small group discussion, but not very active participant; and participates satisfactorily in presentation of small group discussion to whole class.
- 1 point: Student did not participate during the discussion of the "I Have a Dream" speech; keeps few or no notes in journal during mock segregation experiment; shares few or no ideas during small group discussion; and is not very involved in presentation of small group discussion to whole class.

Vocabulary

assumption

Definition: An idea that is taken for granted but not necessarily proven.

Context: Non-Asians often make the assumption that Asians are smart.

bias

Definition: An attitude that always favors one way of feeling or acting over any other; prejudice.

Context: Omitting African Americans from history lessons is displaying a bias that their contributions are not important.

discrimination

Definition: Making a distinction in favor of or against a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit.

Context: Racial intolerance and discrimination are against the law because no one should be treated unfairly based on the color of his or her skin.



race

Definition: An arbitrary classification of modern humans based on any or a combination of various physical characteristics, as skin color, facial form, or eye shape; a group of people of common ancestry.

Context: One function of the census is to count U.S. citizens by race, such as Caucasian, African American, and Asian.

stereotype

Definition: An idea that many people have about a thing or a group that may often be untrue or only partly true.

Context: When we form a stereotype about a group of people, we depict all of the individuals in that group as having the same characteristics.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Behavioral Studies: Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function.
- Behavioral Studies: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Individual development and identity
 - Individuals, groups, and institutions
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